



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**US ARMY GARRISON ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND**  
**2201 ABERDEEN BOULEVARD**  
**ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND MD 21005-5001**

**9 DEC 2004**

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**MEMORANDUM FOR PROSPECTIVE WEDDING PARTIES**

**SUBJECT: Standard Operating Procedures for Weddings in Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) Chapels**

1. **PURPOSE:** To establish the policies and procedures for weddings in any Chapel facility at APG MD.
2. **APPLICABILITY:** All Chaplains, contract clergy, Chaplain Assistants, special duty personnel, volunteers, and persons who desire to be married in Aberdeen (AA) and Edgewood (EA) area Chapels of APG.
3. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**
  - a. The Garrison Chaplain supervises the use of APG Chapels for weddings and will:
    - (1) Establish administrative procedures for scheduling and conducting weddings.
    - (2) Schedule and coordinate weddings along with the NCOIC.
    - (3) Provide administrative support.
  - b. Army Chaplains will perform a wedding ceremony according to the requirements of the Chaplain's Endorsing Agency and the tenets of the Chaplain's religious convictions. Weddings held in the Chapel are worship services, and all elements of the worship service should be in keeping with a spirit of worship and prayer. In all weddings, the final determination for the appropriateness and inclusion of service elements will be the clergy person performing the ceremony.
  - c. Chaplain Assistants may be assigned to cover weddings.
4. **ELIGIBILITY OF CHAPEL USE:**
  - a. Department of Defense (DOD) identification card (ID) holders and DOD civilians are authorized to request APG Chaplains to perform weddings, as well as reserve APG Chapels for the service itself. All use of the Chapel will be in accordance with the Chapel Usage SOP. Priority of use for weddings is AD, RC, Retired, and DOD Civilians.
  - b. Chaplains may agree to perform or sponsor weddings for non-ID cardholders; however, this arrangement is solely at the discretion of the individual Chaplain. (Note: Wedding ceremonies for non-ID card holders will be only "penciled in" the Chapel's reservation records until six weeks prior to the wedding. Authorized personnel have priority for Chapel reservations.)
5. **CHAPLAIN/CONTRACT CLERGY AGREEMENT TO PERFORM OR SPONSOR WEDDINGS**
  - a. Chaplains and Contract Clergy are bound by denominational requirements, dictates of conscience, and professional judgment, and they will not conduct any wedding they deem to violate any of these.
  - b. Chaplains and Contract Clergy are NOT obligated by civil or military law to perform any marriage upon request from couples who possess and/or present a valid marriage license.

c. An active duty Chaplain assigned to APG must sponsor a wedding performed by civilian clergy or a non-APG Chaplain. This is normally the function of the unit Chaplain. The Duty Chaplain will NOT be given this responsibility just because he/she is on duty that day. The Chaplain may not agree to sponsor a wedding due to dictates of conscience, professional judgment, or denominational requirements. However, the Chaplain will seek to find another Chaplain to sponsor the wedding. This requirement may not be delegated. A Chaplain Assistant may not sponsor a wedding. The sponsor must attend the wedding.

#### 6. WEDDINGS BY NON-APG CHAPLAINS AND CIVILIAN CLERGY

a. Persons seeking to be married in APG Chapels by non-APG Chaplains and civilian clergy MUST obtain the approval of the Garrison Chaplain during the scheduling process. Prior to final scheduling of weddings, the sponsoring Chaplain will verify the clergy credentials of these potential officiates as well as their legal ability to perform the weddings in Maryland (see the Maryland Annotated Code, Family Law, Section 2-406). If the wedding is to be done by civilian clergy, the clergyperson must write a letter on official church stationery to the Garrison Chaplain requesting permission to perform the wedding on APG. The letter must contain a statement that the clergy person is authorized to perform weddings in the State of Maryland. Please see the scheduling process in paragraph 8 below.

b. An active duty Chaplain assigned to APG must sponsor a wedding performed by civilian clergy or a non-APG Chaplain.

#### 7. FEES FOR WEDDINGS.

a. The Chapel facilities are free of charge for appropriate use by authorized persons.

b. Chaplains, Contract Clergy, and Chaplain Assistants are NOT allowed to receive honoraria for weddings; however, if wedding couples and others wish, they may make donations to the APG Chaplain Tithes and Offerings Fund at the Post Chapel.

c. If a civilian clergyperson officiates the wedding, it is customary to give an honorarium. This is a private arrangement between the couple and officiant. Fees for clergy, musicians, and wedding coordinators are the private arrangement between the couple and the person performing the service.

d. It is customary to give an honorarium to organists, pianists, and other musicians. This is a private arrangement between the musician and the couple. The names and phone numbers of Chapel organists are available from the Fund Clerk, but payment is the responsibility of the couple being married.

e. Couples may use a wedding coordinator for the various elements of the wedding, reception, etc. The fee or honorarium for this service is a private arrangement between the wedding coordinator and the couple. (NOTE: In matters pertaining to the Chapel or service, the Chaplain performing the wedding will be the final authority.)

#### 8. SCHEDULING PROCEDURES

a. Couples must have completed all paperwork requesting the use of Chapel facilities at least two months but not more than six months prior to the proposed wedding date. Chapel staff will NOT schedule weddings until a Chaplain has agreed to sponsor the service. If the wedding is to be performed by a civilian clergyperson, either the Garrison Chaplain or the unit Chaplain who is sponsoring the wedding will verify the clergyperson's credentials (see paragraph 6 above). The wedding will NOT be scheduled until this is done. All Chapels will use the attached Wedding Ceremony Memorandum for scheduling weddings (Enclosure 1).

b. Chapel staff will allow couples to use the Chapels for a three-hour block of time for weddings. This time is to accommodate limited decorating of the Chapel for the wedding service, the service itself, and clean-up after the service. This is also the time for all photographing to be completed at the Chapel.

c. Normal Chapel programs and special worship services/observances will have priority for use by Chapels. Chapel staff will ensure that wedding services do not interfere with these services. A Wedding Ceremony Memorandum (Enclosure 1) will be completed by the couple and officiating Chaplain/clergy and given to the AA Chapel NCOIC. This memorandum and supporting documentation as required must be turned in at least two months prior to the proposed wedding date. The paperwork will be turned in to the AA Chapel NCOIC for both the EA and AA Chapels.

d. The sponsoring Chaplain must sign the form before it is turned in at the AA Chapel. The Garrison Chaplain is the approving authority for all weddings. After the Garrison NCOIC verifies the facility is available for the date and signs the form, the request will be brought to the next scheduled Chapel Staff meeting for action. The NCOIC will notify the couple within five business days as to the status of the request. Until a couple has heard back from the NCOIC, the wedding is not approved, nor on the calendar.

e. If a civilian clergy will perform the wedding, the clergyperson must write a letter on official church stationery to the Garrison Chaplain requesting permission to perform the wedding at APG. The letter must contain a statement that the clergyperson is authorized to perform weddings in the State of Maryland. This letter must be submitted with the Wedding Reservation Form. The mailing address for the Garrison Chaplain is:

US Army Garrison Chaplain  
2201 Aberdeen Blvd, Bldg 2485  
APG, MD 21005-5001  
Phone: (410) 278-4333/2886 Fax : (410) 278-5590.

f. Only active duty Chaplains assigned to APG may reserve the Chapel for weddings and rehearsals, whether a military Chaplain or civilian clergy is to perform the ceremony. The Chaplain reserving the facility is the sponsoring Chaplain.

g. A Chapel wedding reservation reserves the sanctuary only. (If you require a changing room, you must request that in addition.) The recommended times for weddings are 1000, 1300, and 1600 on Saturdays. One hour is allotted for setup and one hour for cleanup. The Chapel does not provide space for wedding receptions. Wedding rehearsals are normally scheduled the evening prior to the wedding service. Upon request, Chapel staff will allot one hour for the rehearsals.

h. As an example, a couple who desires to get married at the Aberdeen Chapel first contacts the Chaplain to perform the ceremony or the sponsoring Chaplain. The Chaplain will advise the couple on this policy and on their own requirements for marriage. The couple will set the date, gather necessary paperwork, and submit the paperwork (memorandum, copy of ID Card, clergy credentials if necessary) to the sponsoring Chaplain who will sign it. The couple will bring, in person, the paperwork to the AA Chapel and submit it to the AA Chapel NCOIC who will check the calendar and present the date at the next staff meeting. If there are no conflicts and everything is in order, the Garrison Chaplain will approve the date and the NCOIC will promptly notify the couple. Should there be a problem, the NCOIC will also promptly notify the couple.

## 9. WEDDING SERVICE SUPPLIES

a. Bulletins and Programs. Couples using bulletins or wedding programs will have them typed and reproduced at their own expense. Bulletin and wedding program stock is available through local religious bookstores and printers.

b. Candles. All candle holders, standing candelabra, and unity candle must be handled by the couple. Arrangements are available through most florists. All candles must be waxless or dripless. There are no exceptions.

c. Flowers and Decorations. Flowers and floral arrangements are the couple's responsibility. If the couple desires to keep the arrangements, they MUST be removed immediately following the wedding. Arrangements left in the Chapel may be used by succeeding worship services and thrown away when necessary. When decorating the Chapel for the wedding, NO thumb tacks, pins, or nails may be used on Chapel furnishings, or in the walls of any Chapel.

d. Kneeler. If requested, the Chapel will provide a kneeler.

e. Sabers. Sabers, if used as part of the ceremony, may be acquired from Garrison Plans and Operations, Bldg 4304, Wing B, Phone (410) 278-5225.

#### 10. CHAPEL SECURITY AND POST ACCESS

a. The Sponsoring Chaplain is responsible for opening and securing the chapel IAW the APG Chapel Usage SOP. A key or key card will not be given to any member of the Wedding Party.

b. The ID card holder will coordinate access for guests who do not possess a Military ID and are not arriving in the same vehicle with a Military ID Card holder. This will be done IAW the post access roster policies. The following procedure applies for weddings that have more than fifteen guests who do not have a Military ID Card. If there are less than fifteen personnel, they will each need to get a Day Pass from the Visitor's Center.

(1) An alphabetical access roster will be submitted to the Sponsoring Chaplain five working days prior to the wedding. The Wedding Party will select a representative to be present at the gate to check names on the access roster and provide that person's name to the Sponsoring Chaplain. The Sponsoring Chaplain will prepare a cover sheet for the access roster similar to the example shown in Enclosure 2. The Wedding Party will direct all visitors to the appropriate gate, either the Route 715 gate at AA, or the Route 24 gate at EA. The Wedding Party will also direct visitors as to the proper arrival time.

(2) Arrival time for visitors should start 45 minutes prior to the start of the wedding. The Wedding Party Representative (WPR) at the gate must arrive at the gate to check names off the access roster at that time. Thirty minutes prior to the arrival at the gate, the WPR will stop at the MP station with a copy of the roster and a signed cover sheet so that the desk sergeant can alert the gate that there will be someone coming. The WPR will check personnel on the list and then the vehicle will proceed to the police officer at the gate to go through the security check-in. The visitors will not require a day pass. It is most important that each member in the vehicle, with the exception of minors, have a driver's license or a government issued picture ID. If they do not have ID, they absolutely will not get on post. There are no exceptions to this rule. Once the WPR arrives at the gate, the police officers will tell the staff member where to stand.

(3) It is absolutely critical for the WPR to arrive at the gate on time with the list. If for some reason the WPR does not show up, the gate could be backed up for hours if the wedding is a large one. It is not a bad idea to have a back-up plan in case the staff member is ill or has car trouble, or gets lost.

#### 10. CHAPEL ETIQUETTE

a. The officiating clergyperson is the final authority in matters of Chapel etiquette, wedding music, picture taking, electrical recording, etc. The Chaplain, whether officiating or sponsoring, will ensure that the wedding couple is thoroughly briefed as to the APG Chapel Wedding SOP and the particular Chapel's guidelines for use.

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b. The wedding couple will inform members of the Wedding Party and all guests of these guidelines to ensure the sanctity of the service and the Chapel.

c. The Wedding Party arranges for flowers and other accessories, including Chapel set up and Chapel clean up.

(1) Flowers and ribbons may be tied to the pews. NOTHING will be tacked, nailed, stapled, pinned, or taped to Chapel furniture.

(2) All candles used for the ceremony must be DRIPLESS/WAXLESS.

(3) The Wedding Party will designate two people on the Wedding Ceremony Memorandum to clean up the Chapel after the ceremony. The sanctuary and furnishings must be restored to their original condition/position for the next Chapel activity. All personal effects are to be removed from the Chapel immediately after the wedding.

d. Photography and recording.

(1) As policies regarding photos during the wedding service may vary among clergypersons, the photographers MUST consult with officiating clergy before the service. Many clergypersons do not permit flash photography during weddings.

(2) If photography is permitted by the officiating clergy, the following suggestions are provided. Photographers may use video cameras if these are mounted on a tripod and left running during the service. Photographers will not move around among the congregation during services. Photographers may take posed pictures before or after the wedding service, provided this time does not exceed the two hour time allotted for the wedding. Ushers will remind guests with cameras to refrain from using flash during the service.

(3) Video cameras and tape recorders are permitted with the approval of the officiating Chaplain.

e. Food and beverages are NOT permitted in Chapel sanctuaries at any time. Additionally, food and drinks are prohibited in all hallways and classroom areas of both Chapels.

f. Alcoholic beverages are NOT permitted in Chapels except for sacramental purposes. The officiating clergyperson will remove any person in the Wedding Party and/or Chapel who is or appears to be intoxicated.

g. Tobacco smoking and use of smokeless tobacco are NOT permitted in Chapels.

h. Firearms or other weapons are NOT permitted in Chapels.

i. Wedding parties and guests will NOT throw rice, confetti, birdseed, or any similar items in the Chapels, or anywhere on Chapel grounds or walkways. Bubbles may be used outdoors only.

#### 11. MARRIAGE LICENSE REQUIREMENTS:

a. The County Clerk's Office address is listed below. This office coordinates applications and issues the marriage authorization certificate.

Harford County Courthouse Clerk's Office

20 West Courtland Street

Bel Air, Maryland 21014

(410) 838-6000

(Hours of Operation: 0830 – 1545 Monday thru Friday)

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b. Be aware that there may be a waiting period between submission of the application and pickup of the completed license.

12. CANCELLATIONS. Couples will inform Chapel staff of cancellations promptly. Failure to do so will be grounds for refusing to allow rescheduling Chapel use.

13. DISTRIBUTION. A copy of this SOP will be given to the Wedding Party at the time they request the Chapel for a wedding. Each Wedding Party will sign a statement on the Wedding Ceremony Memorandum (Enclosure 1) that they have read and understand this SOP.

14. POINT OF CONTACT. The point of contact for this SOP is the Garrison Chaplain's Office at 410-278-4333.

2 Encls

1. Wedding Request Memorandum
2. Sample Coversheet for Post Access

  
JOHN T. WRIGHT  
Colonel, OD  
Commanding

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ENCLOSURE 1 – REQUEST FOR USAGE OF CHAPEL FACILITY

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DATE \_\_\_\_\_

MEMORANDUM FOR GARRISON CHAPLAIN

SUBJECT: Request for Usage of Chapel for Wedding Ceremony

1. Request the utilization of \_\_\_\_\_ Chapel to conduct a wedding ceremony.  
(Request must be submitted at least two months before the wedding activities and not more than six months out.)

REHEARSAL DATE      (Friday) \_\_\_\_\_      TIME: 1700-1800 or 1800-1900  
                                 (Other) \_\_\_\_\_      TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

WEDDING DATE      (Saturday) \_\_\_\_\_      TIME: 0900-1200, 1200-1500, 1500-1800  
                                 (Other) \_\_\_\_\_      TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Name and Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Groom's Name and Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Requester's Rank/Name and Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Chapel Cleanup Detail (2 people): \_\_\_\_\_

Organist: \_\_\_\_\_ Coordinator/Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Officiant and Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Officiant's Address (if not at APG) \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsoring Chaplain (Must attend if not officiating) \_\_\_\_\_

2. The Chapel may be reserved for a three-hour time block MAXIMUM! This includes set-up, decoration, and cleaning.

3. Musicians and clean up crew (including any payments) are the responsibility of the Wedding Party.

4. I have read and will comply with all conditions/requirements set forth in the APG Chapel SOP and its appendixes. I understand that any regularly scheduled service/activity has priority over all "special" requests and that my activity may be canceled/postponed due to an emergency scheduling of the Chapel (i.e. Memorial Ceremony).

5. Priority is first come first serve. Normal wedding times indicated above must be scheduled three to six months in advance.

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6. Finally, I understand that the above constitutes a request only and will be placed on the Chapel programming calendar after approved by the Garrison Chaplain and NCOIC. Request will not be acted upon until all requested information has been submitted and the appropriate parties fill in all signatures.

REQUESTER'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

BRIDE'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

GROOM'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

OFFICIATING CLERGY'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

SPONSORING CHAPLAIN'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

(Must be signed prior to submitting)

**THIS FORM MUST BE SUBMITTED IN PERSON TO THE AA CHAPEL NCOIC.**

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FOR CHAPEL USE ONLY

NOTES

ID Card Verified:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date                      Signature

Clergy Credentials  
Obtained:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date                      Signature

Garrison NCOIC  
No Schedule Conflicts

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date                      Signature

Garrison Chaplain  
APPROVE / DISAPPROVE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date                      Signature

Scheduled by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date                      Signature

(Enclosure 1 to APG Chapels Wedding Service Standard Operating Procedure)



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Sample Gate Access Roster Cover Sheet

NAME OF EVENT                      Wedding for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

EVENT DATE                         Date of the Ceremony

TIME OF EVENT                      Enter approximate start & end time (i.e., 1000 - 1100)

ENTRANCE TIME                      Enter the time the Wedding Party representative will arrive at the gate

GATE POC                              Name of your Wedding Party representative at gate

POC PHONE                            Preferably a cell phone number for the Sponsoring Chaplain or wedding party representative

ACTIVITY POC                         Name of a Sponsoring Chaplain

ACTIVITY PHONE                      410-278-4333

GUESTS ATTENDING                  List number of guests attending

On a separate sheet, list individual names of guests attending *who do not have military ID cards* in alphabetical order by last name. This list is to allow entrance onto post without going through the Visitor's Center and securing a Day Pass.

Signature block for Sponsoring Chaplain

NAME  
Chaplain (RANK), USA  
Chaplain

Date

(Enclosure 2 to APG Chapels Wedding Service Standard Operating Procedure)